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ABSTRACT

This study applied a schema-based, social information processing model to examine the development of social cognitive aspects of preschoolers' racial stereotyping and stereotype beliefs (i.e., preschoolers' race schemas). The study examined developmental and individual differences in preschoolers' race schematization (salience of the race dimension in social information processing), same-race and other-race preferences, and memory for racially stereotyped portrayals. Subjects were 27 African American and 38 white preschoolers between 3 and 6 years of age, who participated in 2 interviews. Children's recognition memories for 12 racially stereotyped depictions were assessed. In a separate session, children indicated their peer preferences regarding a series of 28 pairs portraying competing pictures of same-sex African American and white children. Children's response latencies in the peer preference task were used as a measure of race schematization. Results indicated significant differences across several aspects of preschoolers' race schemas. Younger children, white children, and children rated high in race schematization demonstrated significantly greater same-race peer preferences than older children, African American children, and children rated low in race schematization. African American children showed significantly better memories than white children for racial schema-consistent depictions. Results support the application of schema-based social cognitive approaches to examinations of the development of children's racial stereotyping and stereotype beliefs. (MM)

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Race Schemas

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Differences in aspects of preschoolers' race schema:

Race schematization, race-based peer preferences,
and memory for racially stereotyped drawings¹

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Differences in aspects of preschoolers' race schema:

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Contemporary examinations of the development of stereotyping and stereotype beliefs in children have recently embraced social cognitive, schema-based orientations (viz., Huston, 1983; Katz, 1982; 1983). Although such schema-based models have been applied to investigations of children's gender-role development and gender-typing (e.g., gender schema models; Bem, 1981; 1984; Martin & Halverson, 1981; 1987), these frameworks are only just beginning to be employed in examination of the development of children's racial stereotyping and stereotype beliefs (e.g., Bigler & Liben, 1989; Ramsey & Myers, 1990).

The present study applied a schema-based, social information processing model to examine the development of social cognitive aspects of preschoolers' racial stereotyping and stereotype beliefs (i.e., preschoolers' race schemas). Specifically, the present study investigated developmental and individual differences in preschoolers': (a) race schematization (salience of the race dimension in social information processing), (b) same-race and other-race peer preferences, and (c) memory for racially stereotyped portrayals. Relations among these aspects of preschoolers' race schemas were also examined.

Sixty-five African American ($n=27$) and white ($n=38$) preschoolers (39 boys, 26 girls) between three and six years of age (mean=54.30 months) participated in two interviews. Children's recognition memories for 12 racially stereotyped depictions (7 stereotype-consistent, 5 stereotype-inconsistent) were assessed (see Table 1). In a separate session, children indicated their peer preferences regarding a series of 28 pairs portraying competing pictures of same-sex African American and white children. Children's response latencies in the peer preference task were employed as a measure of race schematization.

Results indicated numerous significant differences across several aspects of preschoolers' race schemas (see Tables 2, 3 & 4). Younger children, white children, and high race schematic children demonstrated significantly greater same-race peer preferences than older children, African American, and low race schematic children, respectively. Also, African American children showed significantly better memories than white children for racial stereotype-consistent depic-

tions. Interestingly, high race schematic and African American children exhibited significantly more memory transformations of racial stereotype-inconsistent portrayals into consistent ones than did their low schematic and white counterparts. Low race schematic and African American children exhibited significantly more memory transformations of racial stereotype-consistent portrayals into inconsistent ones than did their high schematic and white counterparts.

Results substantiate the utility of applying schema-based social cognitive approaches to examinations of the development of children's racial stereotyping and stereotype beliefs. Results also align with findings from gender-role development research which has embraced a gender schema approach (e.g., Carter & Levy, 1988; Levy, 1989; Martin & Halverson, 1983; Ruble & Stangor, 1986; Signorella, 1987). Results converge with, and build on, investigations extending cognitive-developmental and schema-based approaches to the study of children's racial stereotyping (e.g., Bigler & Liben, 1989; Ramsey & Myers, 1990; Taylor, 1991).

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Table 1

Description of recognition memory drawings (N=12)**Stereotype consistent drawings (n=7)**

- 1) African-American male server & white male customer
- 2) African-American male basketball player & white male head coach
- 3) African-American male robber & white male police officer
- 4) African-American woman restaurant worker & white woman supervisor
- 5) African-American woman purse snatcher & white woman victim
- 6) White male military general & African-American male military private
- 7) White male computer analyst & African-American male janitor

Stereotype inconsistent drawings (n=5)

- 1) African-American male business person & white male beggar
- 2) African-American male client & white male door person
- 3) African-American male riding in limousine & white male riding city bus
- 4) African-American male swimmer & white male coach
- 5) White male acting lazy (sitting) & black male active (riding bicycle)

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables (N=65)

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>S.D.</u>
Age in months	54.30	11.57
Interval between interviews (in days)	3.03	1.28
<u>Race Schematization</u>		
Facilitative score ^a	-0.03	0.27
Inhibitory score ^b	0.37	0.54
<u>Peer Preferences</u>		
Same-race peer preference	12.51	5.96
Other-race peer preference	13.40	5.62
<u>% Accurate Memory:</u>		
Stereotype consistent items	80.79	21.67
Stereotype inconsistent items	80.34	23.54
<u>% Inaccurate Memory:</u>		
Consistent to inconsistent items	67.24	31.72*
Inconsistent to consistent items	71.92	27.29*

^a A negative Facilitative score indicates a high degree of schematization, whereas a positive score indicates a low level of schematization.

^b A positive Inhibitory score indicates a high degree of schematization, whereas a negative score indicates a low level of schematization.

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Table 3

Mean accurate memory, inaccurate memory, and peer preference scores as a function of children's age group, race, race schematization, and stereotype beliefs

	<u>Age Group</u>		<u>Race</u>	
	<u>Young</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>Afr.-Amer.</u>	<u>White</u>
<u>n =</u>	33	32	27	38
<u>Accurate memory (%)</u>				
Ster. cons.	77.91	83.76	87.61	75.94
Ster. incons.	75.18	85.67	83.05	78.42
<u>Inaccurate Memory (%)</u>				
Cons. to incons.	68.44	75.51	74.04	64.66
Incons. to cons.	65.10	68.47	82.14	61.58
<u>Peer Preference</u>				
Same-Race	12.85	12.16	9.93	14.34
Other-Race	11.69	15.15	13.03	13.66
	<u>Race Schematization</u>			
	<u>Facilitative score</u>		<u>Inhibitory score</u>	
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
<u>n =</u>	30	35	36	29
<u>Accurate memory (%)</u>				
Ster. cons.	81.89	79.85	81.86	79.46
Ster. incons.	81.37	79.47	81.71	78.64
<u>Inaccurate Memory (%)</u>				
Cons. to incons.	79.67	73.38	70.31	73.93
Incons. to cons.	62.60	71.61	67.60	65.67

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Table 3 continued

		<u>Race Schematization</u>			
		<u>Facilitative score</u>		<u>Inhibitory score</u>	
		<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
<u>n =</u>		30	35	36	29
<u>Peer Preference</u>					
Same-Race		11.26	13.57	10.72	14.72
Other-Race		14.07	12.83	13.56	13.21

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Table 4

Means associated with significant two-way interactions among children's race, sex, and age on accurate memory, inaccurate memory, and peer preference scores

		<u>Race</u>			
		<u>Afr. Amer.</u>		<u>White</u>	
<u>Sex</u>		<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
	<u>n =</u>	19	8	19	19
<u>Accurate memory (%)</u>					
Ster. cons.		87.09	89.09	75.19	76.69
Ster. incons.		80.10	91.47	82.10	74.73
<u>Peer Preference</u>					
Same-Race		9.15	12.14	15.57	13.11
Other-Race		12.15	15.57	12.42	14.89
		<u>Age Group</u>			
		<u>Younger</u>		<u>Older</u>	
<u>Race</u>		<u>Afr. Amer.</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Afr. Amer.</u>	<u>White</u>
	<u>n =</u>	16	17	11	21
<u>Accurate memory (%)</u>					
Ster. cons.		85.68	70.59	90.41	80.27
Ster. incons.		76.31	74.12	92.05	81.90
<u>Peer Preference</u>					
Same-Race		11.00	14.59	8.36	14.14
Other-Race		9.88	13.42	17.63	13.86